



COMMEMORATOR

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Strange Fruit Found Hanging From a Shasta County Tree

By Melvin Dickson

The mutilated body of 31 year-old Leo Coleman, Jr. of Redding, California was found hanging from a tree in the nearby town of Anderson by two teenage boys from the area who reported it to the police on November 24, 1997. The boys apparently told police they had seen the body November 3, 1997 but said nothing then, thinking it was a Halloween dummy.

Police say Leo Coleman, Jr. died from hanging and claim the death a suicide, as reported in the November 27, 1997 Redding *Record Searchlight*. No complete autopsy was done according to Leo Coleman, Jr.'s death certificate, only an external examination, and, on the urging of police, Leo Coleman, Sr. and his wife consented to having the body cremated. The police have closed their investigation despite the fact that a finding of suicide contradicted the physical evidence and other indications of foul play.

"If I had known there had never been an autopsy, we would never have had the cremation as quickly. We were promised by the coroner it would be done," the senior Coleman said. The coroner, Ray D. Bailey, later told Coleman he'd never done an autopsy on a Negro.

Family Finds Suspicious Circumstances

On November 10, 1997, 59 year-old Leo Coleman, Sr., African-American resident of Anderson, California in Shasta County, a county of predominantly white population with 38% unemployment and the highest rate of welfare recipients per capita in the state, reported that his son, Leo Coleman, Jr., who worked at the local school, was missing. He reported to the police he had last seen Leo, Jr. on November 2, at approximately 9 p.m., when he had dropped him off in the parking lot of an apartment complex at 1555 Fair Oaks Drive in Anderson at the home of his son's girlfriend, Bobbi Culver, a white woman.

On November 25, Senior Deputy Coroner Raymond D. Bailey of the Anderson Coroner's office contacted Coleman, and asked him to come to the police station with his wife to identify their son's body. Police told

Leo Coleman, Sr. that two teenage boys had found the body of an African-American man hanging in the woods near a local high school. The Anderson police suspected it was Leo Coleman, Jr. and said Coleman had slashed his wrists and had committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree, eleven feet off the ground, by his own windbreaker jacket.

Leo Coleman, Sr. and his wife, Ernestine, accompanied by Faye Williams, a close friend of the family, proceeded to the Allen and Vahl funeral home in Redding to identify their son's body. Williams stated it was impossible for Mrs. Coleman to identify the body by viewing only the head, as the facial features were disfigured; a piece of the nose appeared to be missing. She said the coroner reluctantly opened the body bag, and she told *The Commemorator* that the body did not emit any foul odor, despite the fact Leo, Jr. was supposedly dead at least eight to ten days. Mrs. Coleman identified her son's body by a tattoo. However, Ms. Williams stated, the victim's penis appeared to be bloody and disattached from the corpse. She stated the blood on Coleman's wrists looked red and fresh.

Mr. and Mrs. Coleman planned an open casket funeral service, but the director of the Allen and Vahl Funeral Chapel objected, due to the supposed autopsy and the amount of body decay. Both the Funeral Chapel director and the county coroner advised the family to cremate the body.

On November 25, 1997, Leo Coleman, Sr. visited the wooded area where his son's body was located. He reported finding swastikas and other racist Aryan symbols and graffiti carved nearby the tree from which Coleman, Jr. was found hanging.

Yet, on December 18, 1997, Leo, Sr. and Ernestine Coleman went with Patricia Sansom, NAACP member and community activist, and attorney Paul Arons, to the wooded hanging site, only to find all the traces of the swastikas and other propaganda were gone, having been obscured.

Police reports document that Officer Ochoa received three separate reports from three different people on November 24, that Leo Coleman, Jr. was the victim of hanging by adherents of so-called "white pride" elements in



Courtesy of Leo Coleman Sr.

Leo Coleman, Jr.'s body was found hanging from an oak tree, November 24, 1997 in the town of Anderson, Shasta County, California.

the local community. On the day after Leo, Jr.'s death was reported, someone made a drawing of a hanging man and put it on Bobbi Culver, Leo, Jr.'s girlfriend's, front door.

The case of Leo Coleman, Jr., was closed after a two-day investigation as police found "no evidence of foul play" although, according to police

reports, three witnesses told police officers that they had seen the victim alive four to seven days after November 3, and one witness claimed to see Leo, Jr. alive November 19, 1997, and three other witnesses reportedly provided information the victim had been beaten and lynched.

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Editorial

The Strange Fruit of Genocide

Strange Fruit

Southern trees bear
strange fruit,
blood on the leaves
and blood at the root,
black body swinging in
the southern breeze;
Strange fruit hanging
from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of
the gallant South,
the bulging eyes and
the twisted mouth;
scent of magnolia sweet
— and fresh,
and the sudden smell
of burning flesh.

Here is the fruit
for the crows to pluck,
for the rain to gather,
for the wind to suck,
for the sun to rot,
for a tree to drop.
Here is a strange
and bitter crop.

Billie Holiday sang this blues song specially composed for her by Lewis Allan shortly after Billie's father, Clarence, a professional guitarist, was lynched in 1937. It is a heartwrenching expression of the horror she and others experienced in the face of such violence, death and terror, surrounded by conditions of poverty and hopelessness.

This issue of *The Commemorator* is dedicated to telling the truth about the "strange fruit" found hanging from an oak tree in Anderson, Shasta County, California, on November 24, 1997. We are only able to present the facts of this very recent horror story that have come to light, as relayed by the family, police records that have been released to the family, and other friends of the family, because local law enforcement, medical, press and other authorities have worked together to successfully curtail any further investigation into this murder by lynching. (See lead story this issue)

The mutilated body of African-American Leo Coleman, Jr., was reported to the Anderson Police Department by two teenage boys November 24, 1997. The police closed their "investigation" two days later, as both local newspapers and government officials reported "no evidence of foul play," deeming the third such documented lynching in Shasta County in recent months, the tenth over ten years, a suicide, justifying no further action because of this determination. Anderson Police Lieutenant Clancy Finmand perhaps best summarized the official government position, as printed in the Redding *Record Searchlight* on

December 21, 1997, "If it's a suicide, which we feel it is, how can 'white pride' have something to do with it?"

Why is such strange fruit appearing on Shasta County's trees?

Historically, economic depression and lynch mob hysteria go hand in hand. The lynchings in the American South between 1877 and 1890 accompanied tremendous agrarian depression in that area. The South has always been home of the lynch mob. Because of the poverty — a scapegoat had to be found.

The Know-Nothing Party, organized on a national scale against immigrants, Catholics and blacks in the 1840s and 50s, had its origins in the harsh economic conditions in the years leading up to the Civil War when an increasing number of immigrant laborers fleeing starvation or failed revolution in Europe arrived in the United States. The growth of industry, the destruction of crafts and the aftermath of the Danbury hatter's strike, in which unions were declared a conspiracy and the union members were fined for the lost profits of the employer, exacerbated poverty conditions.

The Chicago race riot of 1919 followed by the victory by black workers in the packinghouses during World War I. When the primarily Eastern European whites returned from the war, the employers blamed the black workers, who had unionized, for stealing their jobs.

While today politicians and the media strive to reassure Americans that the economy is on the upswing, and that the widely reported cases of police beatings of Rodney King in Los Angeles and Abner Louima in New York are isolated incidents by "rogue" police officers, but the facts remain that average wages today remain lower than ever, as the rich get richer.

California's rural Shasta County faces 38% unemployment — a result of lumber mill lay-offs and loss of union jobs. What jobs still exist are low-pay, service-oriented employment within the tourism industry. Shasta County has the largest percentage of welfare recipients in California. Pursuant to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, otherwise known as the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, however, assistance will be eliminated for at least 6,324 Shasta County adults due to cuts being imposed by the federal government on states and counties. Over 7,100 unemployed and nearly as many underemployed persons face increasing competition in their search for work, where jobs at living wages simply do not exist. 11,438 children in the county will lose all welfare assistance, and 22,885 food stamp recipients will be cut off. Thousands of elderly and disabled citizens will also lose all or most of their government assistance due to this

program. Small wonder those the government has misled engage in despicable acts of savage desperation.

Meanwhile, state legislators and Shasta County officials have concluded a multimillion dollar deal with the German-based fiberglass manufacturer, Knauf, in a series of closed door meetings. Knauf has promised a whopping total of 150 jobs in the Shasta Metro Enterprise Zone, while Shasta County is to provide

Outraged residents of Shasta County and Sacramento are demanding further police investigation into Leo Coleman, Jr.'s death. To date, official silence has been overwhelming.

millions in tax breaks to Knauf in the form of cheap labor working for their welfare checks, at-cost electrical rates, special water use provisions and the like — all at taxpayer expense. In short, jobs and benefits are being cut in Shasta County for the profit of Knauf, and other international corporations such as Pepsi-Cola, in a pattern of economic policy guaranteed

to bring further hardship and desperation to an already struggling, mostly low-income community.

The Shasta County scenario is not exceptional. Nationwide, for each available job paying a living wage (defined as \$25,907 for a family of three in the midwest), there will be 97 former welfare recipients vying for that same spot, according to a study by the Preamble Center for Public Policy released in December, 1997. The report also predicted that the influx of former welfare recipients into the low-wage labor market will reduce wages by almost 12% — a loss of approximately \$36 billion a year in income.

With 97 individuals competing for each available job and the so-called "safety net" rapidly disintegrating, church, labor and community leaders predict that the crime rate will increase as parents seek alternative ways to feed, house and clothe their children. Many low-income and minority families will find themselves separated, as parents are incarcerated in increasing numbers and children are placed in foster homes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau figures, in 1995, the latest year for which figures are available, the

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Opinions and positions taken in articles with bylines are those of their writers. The views expressed in the bylined editorial and opinion piece published by The Commemorator do not necessarily indicate its endorsement or support. — The Editor

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OP-ED

Ramona Africa — MOVE Bombing Survivor



Photo by Jamie Jossis

Ramona Africa, surviving MOVE member, speaks to a group of people in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Editor's Note: The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party has studied and followed the aftermath of the 1985 government fire-bombing of the Cobbs Creek area of Philadelphia with great concern over the years. Investigations were conducted by city, state and then federal bodies — but no government official has been held accountable for the crime. We also covered the nationwide relief effort of independent citizens to assist the thousands of working families left homeless in its wake, and the legal fights, up to the August 27, 1996 decision by Judge Pollak to overturn the civil court jury's purely symbolic award of one dollar per week punitive damages to be paid by the Philadelphia local police and the fire department. This is the first time, however, that CCBPP Editor, Melvin Dickson, has had the opportunity to speak to Ramona Africa, one of the few survivors of the bombing's target, MOVE.

For more information on MOVE please refer to the February, 1997 issue of The Commemorator newspaper.

Melvin: There remain many unanswered questions in regard to the MOVE bombing, as you know. There has been no explanation of why children were murdered or why the entire Osage Avenue neighborhood was firebombed for MOVE's supposedly ticketable violation of "creating a public nuisance," or what,

if anything can stop the government from bombing its own citizens again.

Could you please tell us your interpretation of the judge's August 1996 court decision, and your plans? Could you address the whole thing here — the judge, the decision, and what plans there are, if there are any plans, for next steps?

Ramona: Well, we are certainly appealing Judge Pollak's August '96 decision now, and we're appealing it because there's no way that we're going to accept a district court judge telling us that the people that dropped the bomb on us, murdered our families, burned our babies alive, have immunity. What does that word "immunity" mean to us except a word invented by the system to give the system license to do whatever they want without being held accountable?

It's MOVE's position, as taught to us by John Africa, MOVE's founder, that if the concept of immunity is right, then it should apply to everybody. And if it's not right, then it shouldn't apply to anybody. And finally, everybody is responsible for their actions. There is no such thing as immunity, it's just something created by the system to try to justify what they do, and to protect officials and protect themselves when they're caught doing wrong.

I can imagine that there are various points and opinions, from not only Osage Avenue residents, but from a lot of people, about not only Judge Pollak's decision, but the whole court case. You know, the media tried to give people the impression that that whole thing put the community up in arms, as if the community members thought "who was the cause of all this?" and they blamed MOVE. That is not true. There were but a few who felt that way; as in any neighborhood, you will find some people who just don't get along with certain of their neighbors.

Most neighbors though, most Osage Avenue residents understood. They understood our issues and were very supportive. For example, we did certain things to protect children and the elderly. This is the kind of work that MOVE does. People were very sympathetic with that and very supportive of MOVE, plus they understood that our whole issue was

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War Crimes

For Abner Louima, and tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of Haitian immigrants, America promised to be a place of refuge from the state terrorism that raged in the Black republic under the U.S.-supported Duvalier regimes (1957-1986) and for nearly a decade after the fall of Duvalier's son.

Many thousands of Haitians braved the rolling seas, humiliating incarceration in Miami's Krome Detention Facility, and the ever-present threat of return to a Haiti governed by either the malevolent Tontons Macoutes (death squads) or a maleficent military whose only record of contemporary action was in its war against its own people on behalf of a rapacious elite.

America, for those victimized by the government, seemed like a shining dream, where safety dwelt.

On August 9, 1997, that bright, shining dream was shattered, only to be replaced by a brutal nightmare for Abner Louima and his family.

For it was in the early hours that the 30 year-old Haitian immigrant was arrested and reportedly beaten by several New York City cops outside of the Rendez-Vous nightclub on relatively minor charges (which were subsequently dropped).

Taken back to the 70th Precinct stationhouse, Louima was stripped, shuffled into the bathroom, and there cops shoved a wooden toilet plunger up his rectum, tearing his colon and lacerating his bladder.

The cops then took the fouled, bloodied plunger and forced it in his mouth, breaking four of his front teeth in the process.



© 1997 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Louima, who had left the government terrorism practiced in Haiti, met the American brand. As he fielded racial epithets, one cop made it clear to the traumatized security guard why he was being so brutalized. Louima, speaking from his hospital bed as he lay swathed in bandages, recalled one cop's words, "Nigger, this is Giuliani time, not Dinkins time." This cryptic message was meant to communicate that under incumbent Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, as opposed to former Mayor David Dinkins, anything goes for cops if done against Blacks.

Louima's attorney, Carl Thomas, Esq., when asked to give his level of confidence in the "investigations" launched by the Giuliani administration, replied, "None."

"The Administration has been involved in daily crisis management," opined Thomas.

In trying to explain the "medieval torture" meted out to his client,

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Letters to the Editor

Editor's Note: The following accounts of the death and subsequent non-investigation into the death of Leo Coleman Jr., were written specifically to The Commemorator by his father Leo Coleman Sr., who lives and works in Redding CA, and two women from Shasta County, Patricia Sansom and Faye Williams, who are close friends of and have assisted the Coleman family throughout this horrendous period. While each provides insight into the hellish nightmare of torture, mutilation and murder combined with official lies, misrepresentation, cover-up and premature investigative closure, perhaps most heart-wrenching is Leo, Sr.'s tormented writing (in the third person) of the truly horrifying fact of his own son's death and his plea to know the true circumstances of Leo, Jr.'s death.

Under the present capitalist status quo, where white-skin privilege of the monied is the order of the day — where the haves and have-nots are locked in an unavoidable struggle where wealth for the haves depends on the exploitation and the miseducation of the poor — it is impossible for low-income people, especially low-income black people, to benefit from the criminal justice system.

A murder investigation and trial is a costly proposition, and admission of even an alleged lynching brings a political price. Hence, the legal presumption against suicide is almost always utilized for only the wealthy, white or black. Recent examples point to this: Actor Bill Cosby's son's shooting death was instantly assumed by police and media to be murder. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent (unsuccessfully) trying to prove media fortune heiress Margaret Leshner's death was a murder, not a suicide. Yet when a black poor working man is found hanging, with his body mutilated, like Leo, Jr.'s, it is deemed suicide by government bodies, and that conclusion is promulgated by a compliant press. No one could possibly believe a person so obviously tortured and mutilated then proceeded to hang himself, except where powers are increasingly desperate to protect their interests in times of economic depression and uncertainty. This is as true in the West or North today as it was in the post-bellum Reconstruction South.

Here at The Commemorator, our hearts go out to the Coleman family and the many families who are victims of systemic aggression. We must unite with all communities that will fight for a better way, for a system of institutions based not on privilege as a method of governing through divide, conquer and control, but on a system of institutions that sees to the well-being of all people.

A Rush to Judgment

Dear Editor,

On November 24, 1997, two white high school students found a young black man hanging from a tree near Anderson High School in Anderson, California. Without the benefit of an autopsy or toxicology report, the Anderson police ruled the death a suicide.

The circumstances surrounding this case are baffling. We have a young black male hanging in a remote wooded area where blacks make up less than a quarter of one percent of the population. There was *no* suicide note, and there *was* racist graffiti written on trees along a well-used trail within sixty yards of the body. A police officer pointed out the graffiti had been there for a long time, but had been painted over shortly after the victim's body was found. Afterward, an envelope depicting a black, curly-haired man hanging from a tree was pinned to the door of the victim's family wishing them a "Merry Xmas."

Considering the circumstances in this case, it would seem remiss to rule this death a suicide without benefit of an autopsy or toxicology report.

It is believed by the family members and friends that if, in fact, the situation had been reversed (White vs. Black) and the circumstances similar, an autopsy definitely would have been performed.

Had this been a young white male hanging in a predominately black neighborhood, all other circumstances being equal, the investigation process would be ongoing. However, at this point, this case has been concluded pending more or new evidence. The Colemans are left pondering these questions, when, why, and how did their son really die? Also, who was the last person to see him alive?

These questions may forever elude them simply because of a rush to judgment.

It is not easy to accept the death of a loved one, especially that of a child. Parents do not expect to be preceded in death by their children. In this case, closure for the Colemans, due to the suspicious circumstances involved in this case and the unanswered questions that crop up daily, is denied. They simply cannot have faith in our judicial system, because justice for the black man is and will remain unequal and political: a rush to judgment!

Leo Coleman, Sr.

They Forgot Public Records

Dear Editor,

For two days, the discovery of the body of Leo Coleman, Jr., was only a rumor. On Wednesday, November 26, 1997, the Redding *Record Searchlight* printed a story: "Body found hanging from a tree by 2 teenagers near Anderson High School." It stated that an autopsy was set for the same day, November 26, 1997.

On Thursday, November 27, 1997, the Redding *Record Searchlight* released [a statement] that an autopsy of Leo Jr.'s body had been done, and that it had been determined that Leo Jr. had committed suicide. The statement was misleading. The parents and the girlfriend of Leo Jr. thought an autopsy had already been performed but when they told the coroner they wanted an open casket service, the coroner said this would not be possible because the body couldn't be repaired well enough *after* the autopsy and would decay. The coroner suggested they have the body cremated.

On the 9th of December, 1997, I met with the parents and told them of my suspicions regarding their son's death. I asked them if they would go with me to the courthouse so I could see what the death certificate said was the cause of death. We wanted to know how the determination of suicide was reached, and how could this case be closed.

The police report raised these questions; we didn't make them up. Here in Redding, California, and in the surrounding areas, poor people have no rights, not even the First Amendment right, of "freedom of speech." If you attempt to use it, it can place you right out of a job.

I asked Mr. Coleman if he would get the police report from the police department. The police gave Mr. Coleman the run-around. I asked a friend of mine if he would help Mr. Coleman get his hand on some facts before the reports were destroyed. On December 18, 1997, Mr. Coleman met with some of the officers involved in the case as well as the pathologist and the coroner. Before going to the meeting, Mr. Coleman took us by the scene where the body had been found to show us where he had seen the Aryan propaganda and swastika markings on the trees the day he was taken to the area by the Anderson Police. The markings had been eradicated.

The police have so much power. And don't get me wrong. I don't have

anything against them. I go to college [studying] under law enforcement officers. There are good police officers and bad also. The bad ones can lie on you, lie to you and lie about you. They answer [to] no one. Perhaps someone in the Anderson Police Department thought that if they put out a story that an autopsy determined Leo Jr.'s death was suicide, people would forget. I guess they forgot one thing — "Public Records."

Patricia Sansom

She Saw the Body

Dear Editor,

Mr. and Mrs. Leo Coleman, Sr. and I went to identify Leo Coleman, Jr. We couldn't identify him at the coroner's office. The coroner said they were in the process of doing an autopsy, which I felt was a little strange. How could they do an autopsy before the body has been identified? We had to wait a day and I.D. him at the funeral home.

At first, the coroner only wanted to show the face, but his mother wanted to see the whole body. Just looking at the face, it did not look like "Little Leo." His mother needed to see a tattoo so she could be sure it was her son. After opening the bag further, there was no foul odor coming from the body although it was said to have been dead for eight to ten days.

The coroner didn't want the bag all the way open. The nose looked like a piece was missing. The [skin] color [from] his forehead to his nose was very white, while the rest of his skin was very brown. In the penis area [we saw] fresh looking blood. The penis did not appear connected, but I did not touch it.

The cuts on the wrist looked like fresh cuts. The blood was very red. The body was too firm and his hands so white. I wondered why his face was so white and his body still so brown? We were told bugs and birds had gotten to the face, because it was uncovered. But the arms were not eaten. They were uncovered, too.

There was no swelling of the body. "Little Leo" looked his normal size. His mother bent the fingers. They were [too] easy to bend for her son to have been dead for eight to ten days.

The family wanted an open casket service, but were told that [it] would not be possible. It was suggested by the coroner that Leo be cremated. He was.

Faye Williams

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Letters to the Editor



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Addresses the issue of poverty, homelessness, faith and miracles and how they apply to the selfish and bottomline United States of the cruel 1990's.

April 1, 1998 — May 3, 1998

Berkeley Black Repertory Group

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Black Repertory Group (BRG) has assumed the responsibility in the Bay Area as "keepers of the culture." In keeping in line with this tradition the group is embarking on a cinematic journey. The regular admission price for Wonderful Wednesdays is the amazing low low price of \$1.00.

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Speak your Mind

Dear Melvin,

POWER TO THE PEOPLE AND
BLACK POWER TO THE BLACK
COMMUNITY.

I feel that we're approaching a time where brothers and sisters seriously need to wake up. We as black men and women have had too many prominent black leaders assassinated for standing up for Black Liberation in this country. Our deceased brothers and sisters are turning flips in their graves out of anger toward the black living because they were murdered for nothing.

They paved the way for black people and we are disgracing their name and cause. Those who took oath to stand and fight with pride and spirit, have lain down.

It is they who should be heading this cause, and educating, training our youth, yet decades have wastefully gone by. We've accomplished what?

I'm not trying to put anyone down, but to check them because they need checking. That's it for right now, brother Melvin. Stay black and combative. Speak your mind.

Lannie D. Hampton (Hakim)
Facility B-5 107 Low
P.O. Box 30/30 H93688
Susanville, CA 96130

Texas Plantation

Dear Commemorator,

To whom it may concern; I am presently in what they call the T.O.C.J-ID Retrieve unit, which I call Texas Plantation. I am currently indigent without financial avenues in the free world, society. My request to you is one of dire need. If you have defective or damaged books or papers about African Americans, that cannot be sold or resold, I would like to be a recipient of any such books. I appreciate very much these books and papers on history or anything else because it isn't often discussed. The information that I learn from the books and papers will enable me to share this and educate my family, friends and others. I pray Allah will reward you with blessings.

Sincerely,

Eddie Carter #443810
TOCJ-ID Retrieve Unit
Rt. 5, Box 1500
Angleton, Texas 77515

Dedicated to One Aim

Dear Comrade,

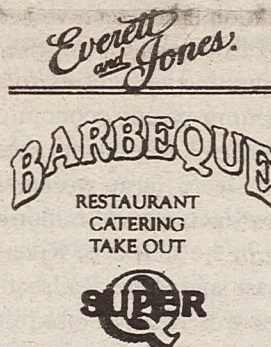
I'm an incarcerated African prisoner and I don't get paid for my slave labor. It forces me to be indigent while incarcerated in the Southern state of KKK Texas. I'm dedicated in seeking how to raise up my African People. I'm deeply dedicated to one aim of the struggle and that is to fight.

I would like to receive *The Commemorator* every month if you would add me to your mailing list. I would like to receive a damaged book by George Jackson entitled "Blood In My Eye," or any kind of pamphlet on that subject. I would like any damaged books on Revolution, Politics, Uprisings. Anything to take my deafness, dumbness and blindness away and open up this muscle in my mind to reality.

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In Memory of Arthur Josh Herron

July 22, 1910 — February 2, 1998

By Clifford Cody

Arthur Josh Herron, born July 22, 1910, in Norfolk, Virginia died at the age of 87 on February 2 at Central Suffolk Hospital, Riverhead, Long Island, New York after a brief illness. Known to friends throughout Long Island as "Big Arthur," Herron brought his physical, moral and political strength to the farm labor movement in Suffolk County, New York and to the movement for oppressed peoples everywhere.

Brother Herron came to Long Island in 1962 and, after a brief period as a farm labor contractor (his sense of justice made it impossible to make a living at it), became an organizer of the Long Island Farm Worker Service Center, better known as the "Railroad Avenue Center," in Riverhead. By 1967 other local activist brothers, including Robert T. Burns and Junior Eason, had arranged for BPP affiliation for a Riverhead chapter, by associating with the militant Black Panther Party chapter in Jamaica, Queens. They brought that militance to the organization of the Service Center. Consistent with the Ten Point Program, the Railroad Avenue Center had a hot breakfast program and a lunch program for kids in school, distributed clothing, and had medical and dental care available. The program was backed by BPP supporters, United Farm Workers supporters and others on Long Island and in New York City.

Brother Herron's role in opening up the migrant labor camps in the area to organizations bringing benefits for the workers was unparalleled. Growers and labor contractors were reactionary and hostile to the idea of having "their" men organized in any way, even to receive material aid, and opposed it. The brothers Herron worked with — Robert T. Burns, Goldtooth Slim, Junior Eason and others — all had well-earned reputations for fearlessness, and for being dangerous to those who opposed them. "Big Arthur" was known for his approachability, and was often sought out by growers and contractors at a time when the BPP and Service Center organizers were running wildcat strikes, nailing the foremen in the bathrooms with 2x4's and shutting down the potato graders until demands for higher pay were met. Brother Herron was known as someone who could be dealt with to work things out without such militant actions, but he always made them pay. Having been a contractor himself, "Big Arthur" knew all the tricks that were used to rip off the workers so that the contractors didn't lose out when potato market prices



were down. He made sure that the workers got a better deal whenever he negotiated terms with local contractors or growers.

Brother Herron and the Railroad Avenue Center — and, as we know, the BPP — made powerful enemies standing up and fighting for those on the bottom of our economic system. On eastern Long Island, those on the bottom were farm workers, and all the low-income and minority people living in the shacks of Riverhead and the east end. The Railroad Avenue Center was finally closed down in a campaign of hue and cry, but the grouping of people who arose through its struggles used the lessons they learned and continued to organize.

By 1972, Brother Herron had seen the pressure of government cutbacks and in-fighting among poverty pimps force the closing of the Railroad Avenue Clinic and lead to the failure of eight subsequent different attempts to organize Long Island's poor, black farm worker community. He was ready to build a new type of organization, and in 1972 he found one in Eastern Farm Workers Association (EFWA) of which he was a founding member. "Big Arthur" worked tirelessly with EFWA for 26 years and, at the time of his death, was President of EFWA's Organizing Committee and also President of the Suffolk County Workers Benefit Council.

A few months after EFWA started organizing in Suffolk County, New York, "Big Arthur" personally ripped the fence from the ground and the boards from the door when migrant farm workers striking the I.M. Young packing company were locked out of their housing as a result of company efforts to break the strike. EFWA moved the workers back onto the

camp with a court order and kept the camp operating for three months until all the workers were able to find other accommodations.

Herron was also instrumental in opening another service center in Riverhead, this time without the noose of government funds or paid staff. The all-volunteer, non-government funded Riverhead Community Service and Health Center (RCSC) was opened in 1973 housing an EFWA field office and Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals (CCMP), of which Arthur was a Board member.

CCMP volunteer nurses and doctors began documenting an outbreak of tuberculosis on the migrant labor camps, and the Suffolk County Department of Health instructed camp operators not to allow CCMP volunteers on to the camps. But Herron knew all the camp operators, some for 20 years, and convinced them to allow the medical testing to go ahead, telling them that they were not the ones CCMP was after, that it was the government that was accountable for the people's health.

Herron was there in 1979, when Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals initiated legal proceedings to force the County Health Department to screen for and treat tuberculosis which had spread to epidemic scale after the county decided to de-fund the migrant health program rather than allow farm workers, including "Big Arthur" to gain control over their own care.

Brother Herron was a regular participant in the picket lines held nightly from 1980 to 1983 in front of the Suffolk County jail, led by Suffolk County Committee of Friends and Relatives of Prisoners, to protest prison conditions and to gain

enforcement of federal court orders issued years before by U.S. District Court Judge Jack Weinstein.

In February 1988, after the Junior Eason Riverhead Community Service and Health Center (renamed in memory of Junior Eason, one of its founders, after he was killed in an automobile accident) was illegally ejected due to the financial and political pressures of a local real estate development deal and was then restored to possession of its premises under court order, "Big Arthur" was there to supervise the repossession. He was the first member back through the doors to reopen the Center at 2:00 A.M., on a cold February night. Herron was 77 then, and he led trip after trip from Riverhead into the Federal District court in Brooklyn, so that the Service Center and its members could fight for their rights. In decisions typical of how "the Man's" justice system serves our poor and black communities, the courts denied the Center's case, in decisions that still baffle volunteer lawyers today.

Brother Herron was also a member of *The Commemorator's* Editorial Board, and was instrumental in distributing this publication to Suffolk County residents who had been active in the old Railroad Avenue clinic, and knew the movement is alive and growing.

Herron is survived by his children Yvonne Shaw of Philadelphia, PA; Barbara Reid, Sarah Herron Sullivan, Maryann Reid, and Edward Herron all of Riverhead, NY; and many loving grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was pre-deceased by his wife, Elois Herron, as well as his son Ernest and his daughter, Delores Gunn.

Brother Herron was a highly regarded and respected community leader. He spoke in hundreds of classes at Stony Brook University and other colleges, telling students the story of the movement he had spent 30 years of his life in, and encouraging them to participate. When "Big Arthur" was doing the speaking, no one could say that they were too old, too tired, or too weak to do their part. Brother Herron's life was an ongoing commemoration of the goals of the Black Panther Party, as he continued to promulgate the demands of the Ten Point Program and the lessons he had learned through all the organizational efforts he participated in after the BPP was gone.

Brother Herron will be sorely missed and deeply mourned by the thousands throughout Long Island and the United States who knew of him and by thousands more who will hear his story as we carry his legacy forward in our daily work.

Huey's Corner

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him "crazy" or "insane." My father was called "crazy" for his refusal to let a white man call him "nigger" or to play the Uncle Tom or allow whites to bother his family. "Crazy" to them, he was a hero to us.

He even stood up to white men when they were armed. One evening, as he rode home from work with some other Black men, for some reason they stopped their car in front of a white man's house and began to talk and laugh. They did not see the white woman on the front porch, but pretty soon a white man came out of the house with an ax and yelled at them for laughing at his sister. The driver panicked and drove off. When they reached the corner, my father made him stop. He climbed out and walked back alone. The white man was advancing down the road with the ax. My father asked him why he had come out with that ax and what he had in mind to do with it. The white man passed off the incident lightly by saying something about "you know how these southern women can be," and how he had to make a show to satisfy his sister. My father realized that in the etiquette of southern race relations this was an apology. He accepted it, but not before he made it clear to the white man that he would not be threatened.

He never hesitated to make his view known to anyone who would listen. Once, when he felt cheated by a white man, he let all the town know what had happened. The man heard the stories and came to our house to see my father. This white man carried a gun in the glove compartment of his car. My father knew that, but he nevertheless went outside unarmed to talk. He maneuvered around to the right side of the car, and sat on the running board with the white man in front of him so that he could not get to the gun. Then he told the white man what he thought of him and said, "If you hit me a lick, the other folks will have to hunt me down because you'll be lying here in the road dead." The white man drove off, and my father heard no more about it.

Another time some whites invited him to go hunting. To this day I do not know why they asked him. They all took their shotguns. Knowing my father was a preacher, they tried to goad him into a discussion about the Bible and the origin of man. Adam and Eve were surely white, they said, so where did Black people come from? Their convenient interpretation was that Blacks must have sprung from the union of Adam and a gorilla. My father countered by saying that Adam must have been a low-life white man to have had sex with a gorilla. At this, the situation grew fairly tense, but nothing came of it.

His protection extended to every member of our family. At the age of fifteen, my oldest brother, Lee Edward, went to work with my father in a sugar-cane mill. The first step in the sugar-cane process was to feed stalks into a gasoline-powered grinder. The grinder never stopped, and it had to be kept full or it would

burn out. This was Lee Edward's job. They had cut the engine down some in the hope that Lee Edward could run it, but he got tired his first day in the mill, and about eleven o'clock, after four hours on the job, he could not keep the machine full. It ran down and burned out. When the owner saw this, he began yelling at Lee Edward, but before he could say much, my father was right there. This white man was over six feet tall and weighed 200 pounds, but my father got right in the middle of it. He shut off the motor and told the owner it took a grownup to keep cane in the mill. My father took Lee Edward off the job after that. He wanted us to be good workers, just as he was, but he also wanted us to grow up proud.

I heard these stories and others like them over and over again until in a way his experiences became my own. Anyone who tried to bother us, black or white, had to contend with my father. It made no difference that the South did not tolerate such behavior from Blacks. My father stood up to the white South until the

day he left for California. He has never returned.

The fact that my father survived these encounters may go deeper than a simple white defense mechanism. His blood was, after all, half white, and that same blood flowed in the veins of other local people — in his father, his cousins, aunts, and uncles. While local whites were willing enough to shed the blood of Black people, it may be that they were afraid of being haunted by the murder of another "white." Statistics bear this out. The history of lynching in the South shows that Blacks of mixed blood had a much higher chance of surviving racial oppression than their all-Black brothers.

In any case, my father's pride meant that the threat of death was always there; yet it did not destroy his desire to be a man, to be free. Now I understand that because he was a man he was also free, and he was able to pass this freedom on to his children. No matter how much society tried to steal our self-esteem, we survived on what we got from him. It was the greatest possible gift. All else stems from that. 

Genocide's Strange Fruit

Continued from page 2

average household income was \$1500 less than in 1989.

While a 1996 survey of the top offices of corporate America by consulting firm Pearl Meyer & Partners found that average compensation for Chief Executive Officers of major companies jumped 23% in 1995 to \$4.37 million, nearly a third of all workers are stuck in lower-skilled jobs paying less than \$15,000 a year, according to an analysis of Census bureau data by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a Washington, D.C. think tank.

Outraged residents of Shasta County and Sacramento are demanding further police investigation into Leo Coleman, Jr.'s death. To date, official silence has been overwhelming. One may recall the early 1960s, when black Americans and their organizations in the South called upon the federal government for assistance when their local and state governments continued to beat them, harass them, arrest them, and murder them for daring to assert their civil rights. In 1962, when James Meredith was admitted by federal court order to the University of Mississippi, in order that he physically be permitted to attend classes, a phalanx of federal marshals was ordered to accompany him. When they were beaten by an even greater mob, President Kennedy called out federal troops.

In 1964, three civil rights workers, Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman, two white and one black, were found murdered under a bridge in Mississippi, and when the local authorities, who were implicated in the murders, refused to cooperate, and a local jury acquitted their murderers, Attorney General Robert Kennedy prosecuted those officials. The sentences they

served for those heinous murders were slight.

Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale studied the works of Robert F. Williams, former president of the NAACP in Monroe County, North Carolina, founder of Deacons for Defense in that state, and one of the first modern black advocates of self-defense. Huey and Bobby disagreed with Williams' practice of calling on the federal government for assistance as they "viewed the government as an enemy, the agency of a ruling clique that controls the country." (Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*)

Dr. Newton also studied the methods of the Deacons for Defense and Justice in Louisiana. Huey felt that the "Deacons had done a good job of defending civil rights marchers in their area, but they also had a habit of calling upon the federal government to carry out this defense or at least to assist them in defending the people who were upholding the law. The Deacons even went so far as to enlist local sheriffs and police to defend the marchers, with the threat that if law enforcement agencies would not defend them, the Deacons would." (*Ibid*)

The end result of such calls has been to add to the formation of a police state in our communities. Police beatings like Rodney King's occur statistically three times a day in every major city in this country. The police now have automatic weapons to add to their deadly arsenal; drug raids have replaced patrols on behalf of the powers that be. Proportionally, there are more black Americans incarcerated in this country than any other segment of the population, and the United States has the largest prison population in the world.

In 1966, when the Black Panthers began their police patrols, that is, patrolling the police, it was a complete rejection of both Williams' and the Deacons' premise, a rejection of what became sanction for both police abuse against the community and cover-up of continued torture and murder.

War Crimes

Continued from page 3

Thomas noted, "They feel you have no recourse...you're just an immigrant."

Shortly after the installation of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as Haiti's president, American officials sent top NYPD officials to Haiti to train its newly constituted police force.

Haitian community and civil rights groups insist the Louima assault is but one of a long train of brutalities inflicted upon their people, and other Black and Latino residents of the city.

What happened to Louima was an Act of War, not on crime, but on a Black man; one duplicated, by various degrees, daily in every New York City borough, and beyond.

For most of this century, cops have been soldiers in a war to attack Black interests and to preserve the status quo; and no reform, no commission, no "investigation," will change that.

The Louima case shows us the savagery of those sworn to protect and serve; who they serve, and who they don't. 

On December 9, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention's definition of genocide:

"Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Our black communities today are victims of genocidal acts, of which recurrent lynchings form only one category.

The only solution to end this savagery and barbarism is for us to organize together, to build organization across racial lines to fight to end the policies of genocide that currently permeate our minority and poor communities — from enterprise zones, to welfare reform, to death squad medicine — government policies that are killing our people while insuring internationally-based corporations and their executives profit, and demand real jobs at a living wage.

Seize the time now, call CCBPP and start organizing today, so that the trees in our communities don't ever bear this strange fruit again. 

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Ramona Africa Interview

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regarding innocent family members' lives, innocent MOVE people who were falsely convicted of murder; a murder that they did not commit, yet were given 100-year sentences and we made that clear to people: that was our issue, that was our fight...so the bottom line is again, that there were some people who had a problem with MOVE and didn't want to see MOVE get anything at all, as if MOVE is to blame. It's that ole "blame the victim" syndrome. But most people were very knowledgeable about the whole situation.

Melvin: We want you to tell the story to our readers. The public has not been allowed to examine recorded FBI involvement in the decision to bomb. Federal clearance is required for that. Can you comment?

Ramona: Well, there is a library here in Philadelphia where these urban archives are reported to exist... with all of the information that the MOVE commission put together after May 13th. That's where all of their paperwork is.

And there is information about the FBI's involvement. FBI agent Michael Massey provided explosives to the police department. That came out. Other city officials met with the Justice Department, and FBI, ATF, the Attorney General's office. In fact, I think they met with Mayor Goode and others. They met with all of these people, and the stuff that linked what, if any, federal charges to the people who were in MOVE, they wanted input. And they were cautioned very clearly...to be very careful because they were told that they really didn't have anything [on MOVE].

Melvin: You know, Mayor Goode claimed responsibility for dropping that firebomb, but still took no material responsibility for it...and has not been made to pay for it in any way, or been made to answer any other questions, such as who ordered the shooting of the 10,000 rounds of ammunition at people who were running, including those trying to escape the burning MOVE building? Or who authorized obtaining the bomb, and then the use of it? Could you comment on Goode's role in the bombing, and any steps that might be taken in regards to that?

Ramona: Well, you know the very troubling part of that is...We supported our first black mayor, Mayor Goode, and this was done out of a very misguided sense of loyalty... How can you say you are demonstrating loyalty to black people by supporting a man who murdered black babies? Now, what about loyalty to those babies that were burned alive? And finally...as long as we do things like that, how are we going to get anywhere, how are we going to send a message out, loud and clear, that such things are unacceptable? That the people, the community will not accept being bombed and burned out like we're at war?

Melvin: Let me ask you another question. What was the role of the media, and what was the percentage of



In 1997, Berkeley, CA, Ramona Africa, MOVE leader, addresses the fight to win a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal who faces the death penalty for a murder he did not commit.

the people who voted for Goode? Do you happen to know that?

Ramona: He [Goode] got the majority, and as far as the media is concerned, the media is just as responsible as the police department, the fire department, and others. If the media had ever told the truth about MOVE, if the media had ever put their prejudices aside and listened to the truth and told the truth about what was happening, then people would have had a better idea of what was going on and they would not have had, people would not have allowed what happened to MOVE to happen...The government felt like it could get away with this, because they felt like they could just say, "Well, you know, that was MOVE," and people would say, "Oh, yes, MOVE," based on the portrait the media had painted of MOVE.

That's why it is so important, as well, for us to work diligently for the release of our brother, Mumia Abu-Jamal. He is a journalist who would not have allowed something like that to happen. He is a journalist who would have spoken the truth about what was going on. And, in fact, it is Mumia's accurate and consistent coverage of MOVE and our conflict with the media that is partly responsible for him being where he's at, because they wanted to shut him up, because they can't afford to have a journalist out there who's going to tell the truth about what's going on.

MOVE is very clear that there are no people of color who have any real authority and power within the system, no black people or people of color who really call the shots. But the thing is, when a black man such as Goode allows himself to be co-opted

by the system, his political career will go forward; if he takes part in the conspiracy to exterminate, murder, assassinate a family of black folks, then he is responsible for that decision. He is responsible for being a willing participant.

MOVE doesn't go back and forth about what Wilson Goode knew or didn't know on May 13th or before, but what we do know is that after he found out that our homes and the neighborhood had been bombed, and were burning down, and that innocent people had been burned to death, this man who took full responsibility, said that he would do it again. Now we know that. So his actions — after the incident — speak loudly and clearly on where he comes from, so that's all MOVE needs to know.

Melvin: Mayor Goode used his claim of responsibility to launch his own extra-legal investigation, and while the mayor's commission was making its inquiries, another investigation was begun by the state legislature, but was held up, and never re-inspired because the often pivotal evidence was all before the Mayor's commission. The result of the Mayor's Commission, just like the Congressional investigation in Contragate, was to render evidence — and in particular testimony — unusable by the District Attorney because the witnesses got immunity in hearings that were not going to make a difference.

Likewise, the District Attorney delayed his investigation, too, to the point where independent

photographers and videographers of the May 13th bombing found themselves threatened with legal action if they released footage prior to the Mayor's Commission report. Do you have knowledge of these and other gag orders? Do you know why the investigations were never made and voluntary witnesses never called, and no court was ever impaneled to adjudicate those who were really guilty, the public officials involved?

Ramona: Well, we've always had a problem with...not so much with the people that were involved...but with the fact that they didn't have any indictment out at all. If they investigated everything, if they came to the conclusion that there was criminal activity, they couldn't indict anybody? And our position was that this is what should determine...the court's decision. That is what they are paid to do. And not that we had any faith in the District Attorney's office, but we didn't have any faith in the Commission either. So what we're saying is...it was very clear to us what was happening with the Mayor's Commission, that it was just a stalling tactic and a tactic to try to avoid criminal liability. Why would this commission spend millions and millions of dollars when there is already an agency whose job it is to do what the commission did?

And, you know, not only that, I wasn't investigated. I was arrested and told I would have my day in court. Okay. I wasn't charged with murder. Eleven people were murdered on May 13th. The record will confirm that. Now, if I was not charged with murder, then somebody was responsible. How come, when it comes to me, and there was no evidence that I committed any crime, the only thing that anybody could testify to on May 13th was that I was coming out of the house...but I was arrested immediately, no questions asked? Meanwhile, where people were murdered, people burned alive, bombed, nobody is arrested! Not one single official was arrested! They're investigating? That in itself told us, and should have told everybody, how unbalanced, how prejudiced, how biased this system is. Their action of putting together an "investigative committee" is to say that they don't know what happened, and they had investigated what happened.

Photo by Jamie Jossis



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Now, if they don't know what happened, and they have been investigating, how in the world did they determine that I should be arrested?

Melvin: None of the city, state, or federal grand jury investigations gave the public satisfaction. They keep saying there was a crime, but no investigation said that it was a mistake, leaving no real recourse or remedy for the families that lost their houses.

Ramona: They were the ones who had the high-ranking authority to indict officials, and they wouldn't do it, and what they said was they didn't find any criminality. They found people who made stupid decisions, but no criminality. Now you're telling me, it's not criminal, or bad judgment; the decision to drop a bomb on a row house, watch the fire it ignited and stand there and make another conscious decision that the fire was not going to be put out. That's not criminal? It's not criminal to take deliberate aim at men, women and children who are coming out of this place that's burning, and begin shooting at 'em? That's not criminal? The perjury committed by Philadelphia police officials and other officials during that grand jury investigation — proven perjury — that's not criminal? We've shown and proven that certain police officers and other officials lied, perjured themselves, particularly about the source of the report, the military explosives that they used for the bomb. I mean, this was shown and proven. They didn't even indict anybody for

perjury. It should be very clear to people that there is no justice, none.

Melvin: Various groupings and associations came to their aid and your aid in your fight for justice. Could you tell me about some of the groupings that have helped you, and their current plans?

Ramona: What organizations are you speaking about? I know that MOVE has worked with numerous organizations, none that specifically did anything actively to support us, other than perhaps coming to the court, like when I was on trial, coming to the federal court trial. People come out for our programs — we do a program on May 13th every year, and we do one on August 8th. So we do programs for those things every year, and people come out for those programs. But you know, we really have to look at things and see if we can understand that this is not something that MOVE caused. You know, all we did was bring it out in the open. You read about people or hear about people every day who were murdered by the police...it's not just MOVE. The things that happened to MOVE, we coordinated them to happen in such a way that when the system comes at us, they have to do it openly, before the public. That is the strategy of John Africa, MOVE's founder. That's what John Africa had coordinated MOVE people to do. There are thousands, maybe millions of people that are victimized by the system everyday, who you never hear about. So, for people to think that this is just a MOVE issue, that it has nothing to do with them, they are really fooling themselves. People better take this personally, because it is personal. It does have something to do with them.

When Mumia was covering the trial of the MOVE 9 who were wrongly convicted of killing innocent victims, and he saw that railroading, he had no idea at that point that he would eventually be living on death row, wrongly convicted of killing innocent people. He could not know that then. But, unlike a lot of other people, Mumia used his skills, his time and energy to expose the injustice around the MOVE case and elsewhere. He did something about it. The way he worked with MOVE, what he did was, each time he came to the court case...it became a demonstration, and he wrote about it. When a MOVE person was attacked or beaten up by the police he covered it, he put the truth out there. And I say, in doing that, he was doing his part. So we all have to do our part because none of us are immune. 🐾

**To be continued in
next issue**

Assata Speaks

Continued from page 9

Dr. Small: One point that you made is that we should insist on the integrity of our leadership. I know it's ironic that the first black woman to join the Black Panther Party is also the first black woman to have gotten beaten up in the Black Panther Party. Could you say something about the integrity of lifestyle of our leadership?

Assata: You know a lot of people, especially the leadership, wanted to talk about the Ten Point Program but the rules of discipline were very much overlooked and a lot of times people simply did not practice what they preached and felt that a leader was someone that appears on the six o'clock news. In my opinion, revolutionary leadership means that

"When you inundate a community with drugs you create the conditions where not only are people incapable of taking control of their lives and struggling, but they become prey to police agencies that want to use them to spy on the community and to carry out whatever dirty filthy deeds that police agencies want them to carry out."

— Assata Shakur

you set an example. You set an example not only by your sacrifices, you get up earlier than anyone else and you go to bed later, you work harder, and you treat people in ways that set an example for the future, with kindness, with respect. Because if we are about social change, that means that we are about creating better conditions for people and also creating better social interactions. That, I think, is a huge part of what we need to be doing. So the leadership of the Panther Party, partly due to just personal defects, partly due to a lack of consciousness, and in some instances due to blatant opportunism, etc., fell short of that. We have to examine those things not to just harp on the defects of the Black Panther Party, but to avoid them in the future.

What a lot of people want to do is depoliticize the Black Panther Party and say, "Oh yeah, they did all these terrible things and that was the universal condition in all of the chapters of the Black Panther Party," which I don't believe is true. I think many of the chapters were very principled, worked very hard, and had a different kind of human

relationship. I think there were many clearly backward ideas that people shared at that time such as that discipline could be put into place by paddling and by corporal punishment. I think that's totally backwards and insane, but, at that time, people's level of consciousness was not at the state where they could just totally reject that. I think that now anybody that's talking about social change and talking about corporal punishment would be seen as totally reactionary. At that time the level of consciousness was much less. I think that the Black Panther Party had great principle, but I think one of the things that we have to remember is that the Party was uncontrollable. It spread like wildfire, although there was organization there was also disorganization. People were put into leadership positions at different levels, different branches, without going through any intense political education program.

What we need to learn from that is how you build political organizations and the necessity of political education, the necessity of learning how to be an organizer, learning organizing skills, learning people skills, and for that process to be a systematic approach. The first day that I went into the Harlem office, they said, "We'll find a membership form," and this brother went back to the file cabinet, but he couldn't find it since the files were all a disaster. So I went in there and said, "You cannot have this mess in these file cabinets," and pulled everything out and filed everything.

There was no security in the organization, even when there was supposed to be, but the reality was a long way from the principles that were set up. In any political organization there needs to be integrity and there needs to be an immense amount of love and understanding for your comrades, the sisters and brothers that are together with you. There have to be things that you share together whether it's holding hands, whether it's going to visit each other's families. There was a lot about the Black Panther Party that was good but there was also a lot that could have really been much better. I think that we have to balance it; you really have to have a balanced vision. I don't like the tendency to make the Black Panther Party this kind of idol organization nor do I like the tendency to permanently dis the Party like some of the autobiographies that I've been reading. 🐾

**To be continued in
next issue**

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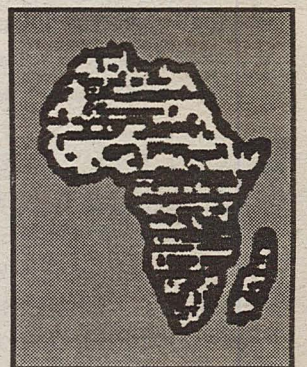
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CCBPP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) is committed to the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP) as outlined in its Ten-Point Program which was written in 1966 by Party founders, Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and objectives toward changing conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression in all low-income and working class communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, as the basis for unity and solidarity.

Also, the CCBPP is committed to the concept of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, introduced by Dr. Newton in 1970 at Boston College. Our Revolutionary Intercommunalism holds that there are basically two sides. On one side there is reactionary intercommunalism which presently holds the world's low-income and working communities under conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression by controlling the wealth, resources and institutions in order to maximize profits for the few. Huey identified this side as the leading reactionary side (the ruling class) which consists of a minority, fewer than five percent of the world population. Under these conditions, reactionary intercommunalism, by and large, keeps the poor and working communities on a cycle of degradation, under conditions of reaction, desperation and poverty, with no end in sight. Newton understood that in order to change these conditions and advance the economic and cultural interests of these oppressed communities of the world, disciplined organizations must be built from the bottom up, enabling these low-income and working communities to fight exploitation and oppression by any means necessary (this fight needs to start in the advanced industrialized U.S. because our nation leads the world in political reaction and economic exploitation).

CCBPP advances and upholds the goals which the BPP outlined in its Ten-Point Program, and those goals are about ridding black ghettos and low-income and working communities of economic exploitation and political oppression, understanding that we can reach these goals only by seizing the time at the point of practice.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. WE WANT FREEDOM, WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities.

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living.

3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that the racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people on our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE. We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities that will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people

should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U. S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U. S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U. S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the U. S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions that are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, govern-

ments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism. It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.



**Black Panther Founder,
Dr. Huey P. Newton**

Shasta County Hanging

Continued from page 10

reminder to us of how far the nation has not come since Huey Newton and Bobby Seale began their police patrols in West Oakland in 1966.

In 1990, Sociologist Robert Staples, writing in *The Black Scholar*, stated that black males were an "endangered species." He pointed out that a report by the Department of Justice revealed that in 1989 more than 609,690 black males between the ages of 20 and 29 were under the control of the criminal justice system — in prison, in jail, or on probation or parole, more than at the height of apartheid South Africa.

Black males make up only 6% of the U.S. population, but 50% of the prison population. Thirty-five percent are considered by legal authorities to be guilty of drug or alcohol violations, 20% of those going to high school drop out. Of those black males not incarcerated as slave labor, 50% are not members of the labor force, while

50% more than that under 20 are unemployed. One out of three have incomes below the poverty line and their violent death rate is six times that of other races.

A black man's life expectancy in Harlem, New York City is lower than if he lived in Calcutta, India, and there is a high likelihood of a black man from Harlem being killed before he reaches 25.

The Deadly Official Silence

In 1964, the murder of three civil rights workers, Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, two white and one black, in Mississippi attracted national attention and forced the Attorney General of the United States to commence his own federal prosecution when the local Mississippi police and sheriff refused to cooperate (the latter had taken part in the murders). Today, not a word is uttered by any government body after three reported lynchings in Shasta County, California. No action will be taken by them to protect the rights of minorities there.

Community activists are demanding an independent investigation, which will necessitate unified, organized action.

Co-optation

Continued from page 8

through a daily practice as members of truly revolutionary organization, align themselves in support of the revolutionary vanguard and program based on several factors, including the following: a revolutionary program addressing permanent true class solutions to the true primary cause of our collective class problem, a true understanding that their exploitive, oppressive system is the primary cause of our collective class problem and that this requires total eradication of that system. It is on this basis that people and resources line up behind the revolutionary vanguard and program.

Our class enemy's plan is to pre-empt, prevent and co-opt this alignment of forces, and bring about its own counterrevolutionary realignment of forces. This the enemy hopes to accomplish by pulling people and resources which are or could be committed to the revolutionary program away from the revolutionary program and causing those people and resources to either line up behind the oppressor's false, exploitation scheme, solution, or to maintain a false neutrality and not support the revolutionary program. This opens the door to continued exploitation by the oppressor, by new or the same methods, while intensifying their total attack pattern, against the revolutionary vanguard and the people. This includes paramilitary style assassination, political prosecution, disinformation and attacks aimed at draining existing financial and other resources. It is only the people's revolutionary vanguard that stands between the oppressed masses and the mass oppressor's exploitation schemes.

The major legislation alleged to be the shining achievements of the civil rights era movement operated to co-opt that movement in specific and the liberation struggle in general. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made it clear in his famed "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, in 1963 at a civil rights march on Washington, D.C., that freedom for oppressed blacks, as an expressed goal of the movement, necessarily involved ending the poverty of blacks. Dr. King delivered another speech in Washington, D.C. at the National Episcopal Cathedral on March 31, 1968, shortly before his assassination, entitled "Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution." In it Dr. King made it clear that equality in the pursuit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as those terms are used in the Declaration of Independence, depended on the material economic condition of the poor (especially black).

Co-optation and the Civil Rights Movement

We are coming to demand that the government address itself to the problems of poverty. We read one day — We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But if a man doesn't have a job or an income, he has neither life, nor liberty, nor the possibility of the pursuit of happiness. He merely exists.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution" [published in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, (James M. Washington, ed., 1st Harper Collins paperback edition 1991)].

Dr. King essentially stated that without the true, material, economic means, as a vehicle for economic independence, there can be no life, liberty, or possibility of the pursuit of happiness, nor equality in regard thereto, but only mere existence, within the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. This view is

Continued on next page

"Black history is everyday struggle"
— Anti-Racist Action



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Co-optation

Continued from previous page

consistent with Brother Malcolm X's repeated teaching that freedom and revolution are based on land, which is the means of economic production. We never got the forty acres (land) or the mule. We didn't get it in 1863, or 1865, or 1964, or 1965 and we certainly don't have it today.

Dr. King made his preceding remarks within the context of announcing a "Poor People's Campaign" which he characterized as "America's opportunity to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots." This was to be kicked off by a massive march on Washington, in the weeks after March 31, 1968. He set forth a basic strategy of unity (class-based unity of poor people) and what he called external direct action

anchored to economic withdrawal. This included withdrawing black and poor and supporter dollars from industrial interests, including banks and insurance companies refusing to cooperate with the "Poor People's Campaign." The plan as he explained was to hit them where it hurt and at the same time use the withdrawn money to build an economic power base within the poor black and oppressed communities. It has been said that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. If this is true, then it follows that those who own the economic means to mass produce those guns have such power, as he who owns the gold makes the rules.

Hence it was clear to Dr. King that the civil and voting rights laws passed and those pending have not and could not bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots which Dr. King had come to see as the first step toward

equality, with regard to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence. We bear witness that with literally thousands of pages of civil and voting rights laws on the books, our economic and social condition continues to worsen as you read these words.

The civil and voting rights era acts and others similar to them are forms of co-optation because they are based on the false idea that they could solve our fundamental problem of economic and social oppression. The lack of such laws were sold to us as false causes of our economically exploited and socially oppressed condition. We must abolish the system of economic exploitation and social oppression that is the primary cause of our condition. Unless a law or a vote can do that, it is a false solution.

at which their positions were becoming no longer co-optable by the enemy. Hence they had to be removed so false leaders could, in their name, continue to deceive the oppressed masses into believing that freedom can be given.

Co-optation turns on the false idea that someone can give you freedom. No one can give you freedom; history proves that it has to be taken. Freedom, justice and equality can only be guaranteed by oppressed-class ownership, possession and control of the economic means of socially producing for itself the material things necessary to remove all forms of class-based oppression. There has never been a point in history where the oppressor has turned over the economic basis for independence to an oppressed class voluntarily.

It is only through reaffirmation to revolutionary principles, revolutionary practice, revolutionary theory, revolutionary program, revolutionary love for our oppressed class and for our vanguard mission of paving the way for revolution and educating the mass of people for revolutionary victory that we can overcome counterrevolutionary co-optation. Revolutionary reaffirmation begins with personal, direct participation in building the ten-point party program for our oppressed class, that so many revolutionaries have been maimed and murdered for advancing. This is a call for volunteers to step forward and pick up the banner of the liberation struggle. There is no higher calling on earth.

In Memory of Dr. Huey P. Newton:

February 17, 1942 - August 22, 1989

"There are only differences in degree between what's happening to the Blacks here and what's happening to all of the people in the world, including Africans. Their needs are the same and their energy is the same. And the contradictions they suffer will only be resolved when the people establish revolutionary intercommunalism where they share all the wealth that they produce and live in one world."

— In Search of Common Ground:
Conversation with Erik H. Erikson &
Huey P. Newton, p.32
© 1973 W. W. Norton & Co., New York



All Power To The People

Reaffirmation of Revolutionary Principles and Program is Key

Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King only officially met once in their lives. This was at the Senate debate on passage of the 1964 civil rights acts, March 26, 1964. A year later, Malcolm X, and four years later Martin Luther King Jr., were assassinated. Just as sure as Malcolm X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevards meet and intersect in Harlem, New York at the corner of 125th Street and Lenox Avenue, the developing positions of these two leaders were bridging the gap toward one another. Both were assassinated at the same developmental point, the point

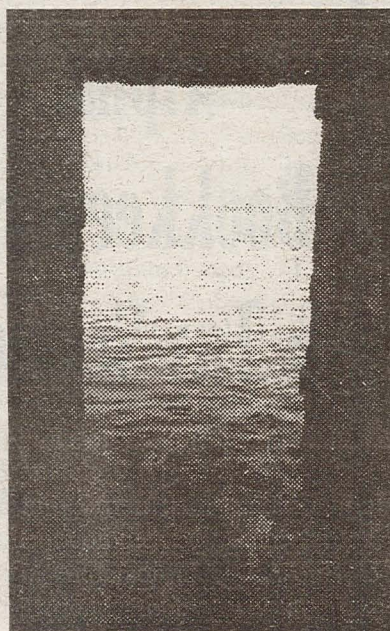


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